



Student Financial Assistance's Performance Development Process

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(NOTE: In an effort to ease initial review and understanding of the SFA Performance Development Process, current GPAS terminology is shown in brackets next to new SFA Performance Development terminology.)

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This document focuses solely on individual development and performance. Team performance will be added to the SFA's Performance Development Process over the coming months.



I. Overview

As the federal government's first performance-based organization (PBO), Student Financial Assistance (SFA) has been given the authority and flexibility to establish a unique performance appraisal system for its employees. While there are unique aspects to SFA's performance appraisal system, the system will comply with all statutes and regulations in title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapter 43, Subchapter I; and Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 430, Performance Management, Subparts A and B.

SFA's new performance appraisal system will be known as the SFA Performance Development Process. SFA's Performance Development Process will:

- Focus primarily on employee growth and development
- Include an Individual Development Plan (IDP) as a key component for defining skills needed to be successful in the PBO
- Provide opportunity to record continuous feedback on exceptional employee efforts that contribute to PBO goals
- Utilize an easy-to-use, web-based tool that is available anywhere, at anytime, allowing "real time" feedback and able to handle large amounts of data simultaneously
- Align individual and team goals, objectives, and development opportunities to organization goals using an SFA Skill Model and Organization Balanced Scorecard

The goals of SFA's Performance Development Process are to benefit the employee by:

- Providing career growth and development opportunities
- Clarifying performance expectations relative to team and organization goals
- Providing an opportunity to actively participate in his/her own career development
- Providing a venue for sharing and receiving continuous feedback
- Providing an on-line tool that can be accessed anytime and anywhere to support the need of employees who work from home or who are required to travel frequently

II. Authority

While there are unique aspects to SFA's performance development process, the process will comply with all statutes and regulations in title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapter 43, Subchapter I; and Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 430, Performance Management, Subparts A and B.

III. Policy

It is the policy of SFA to have a performance development process that is applied fairly and equitably and promotes the goals of the performance based organization.

IV. Applicability

The SFA Performance Development Process covers the performance appraisal of all employees in General Schedule (GS), General Merit (GM), Administratively Determined (AD), and prevailing rate pay plans.

V. Definitions

Achievement Level (Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, Improvement Required) - the threshold, requirements, or expectations that must be met to be appraised at a particular level of performance for a particular skill.



Comments – opportunity for recording constructive and reinforcing feedback for the employee - function that allows all Supervisors and Development Coaches a means to share and document feedback acknowledging an employee's contribution to the achievement of PBO goals and providing constructive coaching. The comments will be reviewed prior to the Supervisor assigning a formal Rating of Record at the end of the development period.

Development Coaches [Evaluators] – a colleague or subordinate who, at the request of an employee, agrees to provide anonymous feedback on the employee's development and performance.

Exceeds Expectations – achievement level rating beyond the standard or simply acceptable level of performance for a defined skill in the employee's Skill Profile [Performance Plan]. An "Exceeds Expectations" achievement level is one in which an employee performs above and beyond expected level of achievement.

Functional Skills [Critical Elements] – the knowledge, expertise, and abilities required to successfully perform a specific role in SFA .

Improvement Required – achievement level rating that is below the standard accepted level of performance for a defined skill in the employee's Skill Profile [Performance Plan].

Individual Development Plan – annual plan created by the employee that describes the employee's performance goals and approaches/tactics for achieving such goals which include the way in which the employee will acquire the required knowledge, expertise, and abilities to successfully perform, develop and grow at SFA.

Managerial Skills [Critical Elements for Rating Officials] – the knowledge, expertise, and abilities associated with leading and managing SFA. The Managerial Skills are applicable to all Supervisors, Managers and Executives in the organization.

Meets Expectations [Standards] – standard acceptable achievement level rating expected of all employees for a defined skill in the employee's Skill Profile [Performance Plan].

Performance Development Process - annual process that provides career growth and development opportunities to employees; clarifies performance expectations relative to team and organization goals; provides an opportunity to actively participate in individual career development; and provides a venue for sharing and receiving continuous feedback.

Performance Goals – annual goals focused on the employee's targeted performance outcomes and skill development areas for the year. Performance goals are one component of the employee's Individual Development Plan.

Professional Skills [Critical Elements] – behaviors, expertise and abilities required of all employees to help create the performance-based culture of SFA.

Rating of Record – the achievement level prepared at the end of a development period for performance over the entire period, including the assignment of a summary rating.

SFA Skill Model – outlines the capabilities necessary to enable organization success. The Skill Model is a compilation of the associated knowledge (learned information), abilities (capability to use in practice what is learned) and professional qualities (features contributing to the establishment of culture and success of the organization) required of all SFA employees to ensure successful job performance.



Skill Profile [Performance Plan] – composite list of the employee’s professional, managerial, and functional skills against which the employee will create his/her Individual Development Plan and receive feedback at the end of the development period.

Step 1: Goal Setting/Expectation Setting - first step of the development period. The employee and supervisor develop and agree on the employee’s Individual Development Plan and the Employee Skill Profile. Additionally, the employee will select and the supervisor will “approve” the appropriate Development Coaches for the employee.

Step 2: Mid-Point Progress Discussion – second formal step of the development period. The employee and supervisor discuss the employee’s IDP and progress against defined goals and development objectives. The employee and supervisor also discuss progress made in developing skills the employee listed in his/her Skill Profile.

Step 3: Feedback Rating – third step of the development period. Employee completes a self-evaluation based on his/her Skill Profile. Development Coaches also complete anonymous skill ratings for the employee (which are summarized into a composite report). Open comments are reviewed by the Supervisor. Finally, the Supervisor completes a skill rating for the employee considering all comments received throughout the year as well as the self-rating provided by the employee and summarized ratings provided by the Development Coaches.

Step 4: Development Feedback Session – final step in the development period. The employee and Supervisor will review goal achievement and development areas for the period and discuss the formal Rating of Record based on the cumulative input from the employee’s Development Coaches and Supervisor.

VI. Responsible Parties

SFA Director of Human Resources

Advises the SFA COO on all aspects of the SFA Performance Development Process. Monitors compliance with the regulatory requirements regarding the administration of the process at SFA. Provides advice and guidance to SFA General Managers on the administration of the process.

Supervisor [Rating Official]

Works with employees to develop Individual Development Plan (IDP), select Development Coaches, and to identify Functional Skills [Critical Elements] for evaluation. The Supervisor also completes the employee’s final rating using the employee’s self-evaluation and Development Coaches ratings as inputs. The Supervisor meets formally with the employee at three points throughout the year: first, to review the employee’s Individual Development Plan and Skill Profile; second, to review progress toward achieving defined goals in the IDP and developing skills identified in the Skill Profile; and third, for the Final Feedback Session where the Rating of Record is shared. In addition to these ‘formal points’ throughout the year, the Supervisor should also provide informal continuous feedback to an employee and ‘formal’ continuous feedback through the use of the Comments function. If necessary, the Supervisor also administers opportunity periods for an employee to improve his/her performance, or takes other appropriate action. In compliance with 5 CFR 531.504, the Supervisor documents recommendations for Quality Step Increases (QSIs).

Development Coaches (Colleagues, Subordinates) [Evaluators]

Provide ‘formal continuous’ anonymous feedback throughout the performance period using the Comments function. Complete rating for final development feedback based on personal observation of the employee’s performance.



Employee

Drafts his/her annual Individual Development Plan and reviews with his/her Supervisor. The Employee works with his/her Supervisor to develop Skill Profile [Performance Plan] against which the employee will be evaluated during the performance period. The Employee selects his/her Development Coaches and meets with each selected Development Coach to confirm his/her participation in the employee's development. Once the employee has received acceptance from each Development Coach, the employee confirms those coaches with his/her Supervisor. The employee is responsible for monitoring his/her progress in achieving performance goals and development opportunities, and recording such progress using the on-line tool. The employee completes a self-evaluation using the on-line tool. Employee is required to participate in performance development and feedback sessions with his/her Supervisor periodically throughout the year.

VII. Development Period

The Performance Development Period under the new Performance Development Process will begin October 1 and end July 31. There are four steps in SFA's Performance Development Period:

- Step 1: *Goal Setting/Expectation Setting* from September 1 – September 30
- Step 2: *Progress Check* from January 31 – February 28
- Step 3: *Feedback Rating* from July 1 – July 31
- Step 4: *Development Feedback Session* from August 1 – August 31.

An individual must serve for a minimum of 120 calendar days in his/her current position under an Individual Development Plan and Skill Profile [Performance Plan] in order to receive an evaluation. When the minimum 120 day development period cannot be served in the employee's current position before the end of SFA's established development period, the period will be extended until the 120 days are met. The employee's performance will be reviewed at that time and any interim ratings or Development Coaches' [evaluators'] input will be considered. The employee will then receive a Rating of Record.

Immediately upon completion of an extended development period, a new Individual Development Plan and Skill Profile [Performance Plan] will be required to cover the period from that date until the end of the current development period.

VIII. SFA Skill Model

What is the SFA Skill Model?

The SFA Skill Model outlines the capabilities necessary to enable organization success. The Skill Model is a compilation of the associated knowledge (learned information), abilities (capability to use in practice what is learned) and professional qualities (features contributing to the establishment of culture) required of all SFA employees to ensure successful job performance.

Using the SFA Skill Model to identify and define the desired skills to perform the roles within SFA will:

- Help align employee job and performance expectations with the organization's goals to increase customer satisfaction, decrease unit cost and increase employee satisfaction
- Serve as a framework/tool for identifying employee training and education opportunities
- Help outline expectations for the different roles in the organization and provide a clear picture of the skills needed to succeed in each role



How should the SFA Skill Model be used?

SFA has defined three categories of skills: Professional, Managerial and Functional Skills:

- The **Professional Skills [Critical Elements]** define those knowledge, expertise, and behaviors required of *all* employees to help create the performance-based culture of SFA.
- The **Managerial Skills [Critical Elements for Rating Officials]** outline the knowledge, expertise, and abilities associated with leading and managing SFA. The Managerial Skills are applicable to all Supervisors in the organization.
- The **Functional Skills [Critical Elements]**, organized by channel/organization unit, define the knowledge, expertise, and abilities required to successfully perform a *specific* role in SFA.

Given these three skill categories, the Skill Model is used to develop the employee's Skill Profile [Performance Plan] which defines the skills required to achieve success in a given role at SFA. *All employees* must have *all Professional Skills* as part of their Skill Profile. *All Managers* must *also have all Managerial Skills* as part of their Skill Profile; however, if the employee is not a Supervisor, he/she will not select any Managerial Skills. Employees will create unique Skill Profiles by selecting appropriate Functional Skills. The employee and his/her Supervisor review the Functional Skill list, and select the six Functional Skills most relevant to the employee's specific role in the organization. For example, if an employee's role within SFA University were to deliver training to SFA employees, the employee might select the skills: 'Learning Design and Development; Training Delivery; Facilitation; Product Knowledge, Communication Management, Planning and Budgeting' from SFA University's Functional Skill List. Therefore, a Manager in SFA University whose primary responsibility is delivering training to SFA employees, might have the following skill profile:

Example: Skill Profile for a Manager in SFA University:

EXAMPLE

| Professional Skills | Managerial Skills | Functional Skills |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Continuous Learning & Improvement | Employee Development | Learning Design & Development |
| Customer Service Orientation | Knowledge Sharing | Training Delivery |
| Goals/Results Orientation | Problem Solving & Decision Making | Facilitation |
| Interpersonal Communications | Program Management | Product Knowledge |
| Professionalism | Visioning | Communication Management |
| Project Management | | Planning & Budgeting |
| SFA Business Knowledge | | |
| Technology Literacy | | |

The employee creates his/her Individual Development Plan and Skill Profile [Performance Plan] which defines the development opportunities for the year, as well as the skills against which the employee's performance will be rated at the end of the development period.

IX. Planning Performance

Within the month of September (within 30 calendar days after the beginning of the development period), or after entry into a new position, the Supervisor and employee will develop and agree on the employee's Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Skill Profile [Performance Plan].



The Individual Development Plan is composed of two key components:

- Performance Goals – annual goals focused on the employee's targeted performance outcomes for the year and skill development areas.
- Approaches to Achieve Goals – associated with each goal, the employee will define different approaches or tactics for achieving his/her goals. These approaches focus on methods for developing the necessary skills to achieve performance outcomes (e.g., seminars, training courses, learning events, research, etc.).

The Employee's Skill Profile is also developed in September and is composed of three sections:

1. Professional Skills [Critical Elements] – the knowledge, expertise and behaviors required of *all* employees to help create the performance-based culture of SFA. All of SFA's Professional Skills will be included in the Employee's Skill Profile, regardless of the employee's role or level in the organization.
2. Managerial Skills [Critical Elements for Rating Officials] outline the knowledge, expertise, and abilities associated with leading and managing SFA. The Managerial Skills are applicable to all Supervisors assigned leadership responsibilities in the organization.
3. Functional Skills [Critical Elements] - organized by channel/organization unit, define the knowledge, expertise, and abilities required to successfully perform a *specific* role in SFA.

(NOTE: For all of the skills, there is an associated definition for the Meets Expectations achievement level. It is this level that defines the standard for acceptable performance on the given skill.)

The employee and Supervisor will agree on the employee's IDP and Skill Profile and ensure the information is documented in the on-line tool. The employee and Supervisor will have on-line, secure access to all information throughout the performance period.

Aside from developing an IDP and creating a Skill Profile, the employee and Supervisor will also agree on the employee's Development Coaches [Evaluators]. The employee will select three Development Coaches. The employee will speak with each of these Development Coaches to confirm their willingness to accept the responsibility as a Development Coach. (If the individual is a Supervisor, one of the Development Coaches will be a subordinate and the other two Development Coaches will be colleagues. If the employee is not a Supervisor, all three Development Coaches will be colleagues.) The Development Coaches must be individuals who are familiar with the employee's work quality and service delivery, and with whom the employee interacts on a regular basis during the development period. These Development Coaches must be able to observe the employee's performance and be contacted by the employee for confirmation that they will participate in the development process. After speaking with prospective Development Coaches and gaining their commitment, the employee will meet with the Supervisor for final agreement of the Development Coaches. The employee has 30 calendar days from September 1 to confirm the three individuals to serve as Development Coaches.

X. Reviewing Progress

From January 31 through February 28, the employee and Supervisor will have a formal Mid-Point Progress Discussion. During this discussion the employee and Supervisor will review the employee's IDP and discuss the employee's progress against defined goals and development objectives. The employee and Supervisor will also discuss progress made in developing skills the employee listed in his/her Skill Profile. The Supervisor will record the outcomes of the discussion in the on-line tool. (Note: Additionally, throughout the development period, it is the responsibility of the employee to record progress against goals and objectives in the on-line tool). Employees who have not been in a position for 120 calendar days prior to the Mid-Point Progress Discussion of the normal performance development period, will be given a progress review at the mid-point of their individual development cycle.



In addition to the Mid Point Progress Discussion, SFA's Performance Development Process provides an opportunity for recording continuous feedback for the employee. The Performance Development Process includes a function that allows all Supervisors and Development Coaches a means for sharing and documenting both reinforcing and constructive comments on the employee's contribution to the achievement of PBO goals. The comments will be reviewed prior to the Supervisor assigning a formal Rating of Record at the end of the performance period.

XI. Appraising Performance

STEP 1
“Goal Setting/Expectation Setting”
Sept 1 - Sept 30

- Employee develops Individual Development Plan (IDP) - (Goals and Approaches to Achieve Goals)
- Employee develops Employee Skill Profile
- Employee and Supervisor meet to discuss and agree on IDP and Skill Profile
- Employee selects 3 Development Coaches (individuals working directly with employee) and Supervisor confirms selection

STEP 2
“Mid-Point Progress Discussion”
Jan 31 - Feb 28

- Supervisor and employee discuss progress against IDP and Skill Profile

STEP 3
“Feedback Rating” *
Jul 1 - Jul 30

- Employee and Development Coaches anonymously complete skill rating for employee
- Open comments reviewed by Supervisor
- Supervisor completes skill rating for employee based upon ratings completed by the employee and Development Coaches
- Team performance is evaluated using Balanced Scorecard

STEP 4
“Development Feedback Session”
Aug 1- Aug 30

- Employee meets with Supervisor to discuss skill rating

* Should an employee perform significantly below the desired skill level, a strategy to address skill development will be developed (i.e., Professional Improvement Plan)
* Process will eventually include team performance in addition to individual performance

During Step 3, 'Feedback Rating', Development Coaches are required to assign an achievement level for each skill listed in the employee's Skill Profile based on a scale of: Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations [standard], and Improvement Required. The Development Coaches will use the benchmark definitions for Exceeds Expectations and Meets Expectations in the SFA Skill Model to assign the appropriate achievement level to each skill.



The Development Coaches must provide a written statement to support an evaluation of Improvement Required; however, Development Coaches are encouraged to provide supporting statements for any of their feedback. All three of the employee's Development Coaches must provide skill ratings in order for the input to be made available to the employee and Supervisor for consideration. If fewer than the three Development Coaches provide feedback, the information will not be provided to the Supervisor or employee. The ratings completed by the Development Coaches will be anonymous and will not be provided to the employee or the Supervisor. The Development Coaches' input will be summarized and will only be accessible for review by the employee's Supervisor in that summarized report form.

Employee

While the Development Coaches [Evaluators] are completing their evaluations, the employee will complete a self-evaluation using the on-line tool, for the Supervisor's consideration. After the Supervisor has completed the Rating of Record, in Step 4, 'Development Feedback Sessions', the employee and Supervisor will review the rating together and discuss achievements and development opportunities over the next development period.

Supervisor [Rating Official]

The Supervisor [Rating Official] will consider development documentation that he/she has maintained, the Development Coaches' [Evaluators'] summary input and comments, and the employee's self evaluation, and will assign an achievement level using the benchmark descriptions in the SFA Skill Model. The Supervisor [Rating Official] is required to provide a written statement for any evaluation on any skill that is below the Meets Expectations [standard - Pass] level. This information becomes part of the employee's Rating of Record.

A Summary Appraisal Report will be generated for the Supervisor to use when he/she prepares the Rating of Record. The Summary Appraisal Report will include the Development Coaches' input. The Supervisor must provide comments on the Rating of Record should the rating given by the Supervisor be different than the summary input from the Development Coaches would warrant. Also, should a Supervisor assign an employee a Rating of Record that is below the Meets Expectations [Standard] level, the Supervisor must review this rating with the Supervisor's General Manager, CIO, CFO or Director prior to finalizing and sharing with the employee. The Supervisor's ratings for the skills will be "averaged" to derive a final rating for each skill.

The overall rating of record will be based on the following:

- Exceeds Expectations summary rating shall be assigned if and only if:
 - An individual receives three or more ratings of "Exceeds Expectations" out of the six Functional Skills outlined in his/her Skill Profile
 - Individual did not receive any ratings of "Improvement Required" on the Professional Skills, Managerial Skills (if applicable), or Functional Skills
- Meets Expectations summary rating shall be assigned if and only if:
 - Individual did not receive any more than two "Improvement Required" ratings out of the six Functional Skills in his/her Skill Profile
 - Individual did not receive any ratings of "Improvement Required" on the Professional Skills and Managerial Skills (if applicable)
- Improvement Required summary rating shall be assigned if and only if:
 - Performance on one or more Professional Skills, and/or one or more Managerial Skills (if applicable) are appraised as "Improvement Required"
 - An individual receives three or more ratings of "Improvement Required" out of the six Functional Skills outlined in his/her Skill Profile.



The Rating of Record is ultimately determined by the Functional Skill achievement levels *unless* the employee receives an 'Improvement Required' rating on one of the Professional Skills or Managerial Skills (if applicable).

Once the Supervisor completes the Rating of Record, the Supervisor meets with the employee to share all documentation and discuss opportunities for continuous improvement and development (Step 4: Development Feedback Session). The employee will sign and date the rating acknowledging discussion and receipt of the evaluation. If the employee refuses to sign the evaluation, the Supervisor will document that the discussion was held and the evaluation was shared with the employee.

XII. Dispute Resolution

The information from this section is from the Personnel Manual Instruction for the General Performance Appraisal System, with few modifications for terminology relevant to SFA's Performance Development Process. SFA does not intend to change the Dispute Resolution process at this time.

A. Except as provided below in paragraph C, bargaining unit employees must use the problem resolution and grievance procedures in the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 42, in order to resolve disputes about; e.g., the Rating of Record; the Supervisor's [Rating Official's] required comments; selection of Development Coaches [evaluators]; participation as a Development Coach [an evaluator]; issues regarding Skills [elements], etc. The problem resolution procedure must be initiated with the next level official within 10 work days from the date of the incident giving rise to the concern or the date the employee first became aware of the matter out of which the concern arises. Within 10 work days from the expiration of the problem resolution procedures, the bargaining unit employee (and his/her Union representative, if any) may file a grievance with the General Manager, CIO, CFO or Director subject to the provisions in Article 42 and paragraph C below. Employees should refer to Article 42 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement for the details and requirements of these procedures.

B. Except as provided below in paragraph C, non-bargaining unit employees may use the grievance procedures in Personnel Manual Instruction (PMI) 771-1 to resolve disputes regarding the Performance Development Process [appraisal process]; e.g., the Rating of Record; the Supervisor's [Rating Official's] required comments (attached to the Rating of Record); selection of Development Coaches [evaluators]; participation as a Development Coach [an evaluator]; issues regarding Skills [elements], etc. A grievance must be initiated within 15 calendar days of the date the incident occurred.

Except as provided below in paragraph C, if a non-bargaining unit employee is requesting reconsideration of a Rating of Record, a written request must be made within 5 work days of the receipt of the Rating of Record, with a copy to the Supervisor [Rating Official]. The supervisor should respond in writing within 10 work days after receipt of the employee's request. If the employee does request reconsideration, the 15 calendar days provided to initiate a grievance is calculated from the date of receipt of the supervisor's written response, or at the expiration of 10 work days after it was submitted, whichever is earlier. If the employee does not request reconsideration, the 15 calendar days provided to initiate a grievance under PMI 771-1 is calculated from the date the employee receives the Rating of Record.

C. Because Ratings of Record and comments are to be used for feedback and to promote continuous improvement, bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit employees may not grieve: (a) the ratings of the Development Coaches [evaluators] in the Final Evaluation and Feedback and Development Session [Summary Evaluation Report and Summary Appraisal Report]; (b) the content of the Development Coaches' [evaluators'] comments; or (c) the content of other performance feedback. Employees also may not grieve the Supervisor's [Rating Official's] rating in the Final Evaluation and Feedback and Development Session unless they are grieving the Rating of Record.



XIII. Interim Ratings

Position Changes

Supervisors [Rating Officials] must provide interim ratings when:

- (1) the Supervisor [Rating Official] departs his/her position; or
- (2) the employee changes positions and has been in a position for 120 calendar days.

Details/Temporary Promotions

When an employee is expected to be on a detail or temporary promotion for at least 120 calendar days, the Supervisor managing the detail or promotion will work with the employee to add any necessary unique Functional Skills [critical elements] to the employee's Skill Profile, implement the performance plan within 30 calendar days, and serve as an additional Development Coach to provide performance feedback to the employee's Supervisor [Rating Official] at the completion of the detail, promotion, or at the end of the development period [rating period]. The Individual Development Plan and Skill Profile should be updated to document the employee's additional goals and relevant Functional Skills while on detail or temporary promotion. For details or temporary promotions less than 120 calendar days, the Supervisor [ED Rating Official] managing the detail or promotion will provide a written summary, using the Comments function, of the employee's accomplishments to the employee's Supervisor [Rating Official] of record.

The Supervisors of detailed employees will provide a rating for employees who have been in one or more positions for at least 120 calendar days. This rating is factored in to the final Rating of Record just as Development Coaches ratings are handled (i.e., The detail supervisor administers a rating which is summarized with other Development Coach ratings at the end of the development period and provided to the primary Supervisor completing the Rating of Record). Primary Supervisors will also obtain written summaries from the Comments function, for employees who are detailed or temporarily promoted for less than 120 calendar days.

XIV. Overall Performance “Below Expectations”

The information from this section is from the Personnel Manual Instruction for the General Performance Appraisal System, with few modifications relevant to SFA's Performance Development Process. SFA does not intend to change the Sub-standard Level of Performance process as this time.

At any time during the performance development [appraisal] period, if the Supervisor [Rating Official] determines that an employee's level of performance on a Professional Skill, a Managerial Skill, or Functional Skills [all critical elements] falls to the Improvement Required [Fail] level, he/she shall initiate immediate assistance geared toward raising the employee's level of performance back to the Meets Expectations [Pass] level. Such assistance may include formal training, on-the-job training, counseling, and/or closer supervision. The Supervisor [Rating Official] will meet with the employee to discuss ways to improve performance.

Specific steps that must be taken include:

- (1) Except for Schedule C or probationary employees, who may be terminated at any time, or other employees excluded from coverage by 5 CFR 430.202, an employee rated Improvement Required [Fail] on his/her Rating of Record, or whose performance falls to the Improvement Required [Fail] level on a Professional Skill, a Managerial Skill, or Functional Skills [all critical elements] during the performance development [appraisal] period, must be given a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate Meets Expectations [Pass] performance on the critical element(s)



rated Improvement Required [Fail]. In order to be rated at the Improvement Required [Fail] level, the employee must have worked in his/her current position, with a performance agreement in place, for at least 120 calendar days.

The employee will be informed in writing of: the Skill(s) [element(s)] for which performance has been rated at the Improvement Required [Fail] level on the Rating of Record or has fallen to the Improvement Required [Fail] level during the development [appraisal] period; the specific performance areas; the level of performance that must be attained in order to reach the Meets Expectations [standard - Pass] level; assistance to be provided during the opportunity period; and the consequences of Improvement Required [Fail] performance. During the opportunity period, input from the Development Coaches [evaluators] will continue to be obtained at the mid-point or end of the development [appraisal] period. Unless the employee's performance improves to, and is sustained at the Meets Expectations [standard - Pass] level for 1 year, he/she may be reassigned, reduced in grade, or removed in accordance with PMI 432-1.

(2) The employee shall be given a progress review by the Supervisor [Rating Official] each quarter until performance reaches Meets Expectations [standard - Pass] or until an opportunity period to demonstrate Meets Expectations [standard - Pass] performance is initiated.

(3) Employees and Supervisors [Rating Officials] may receive procedural information on this process from the Employee Relations Team or appropriate regional HRG staff and SFA Human Resources. Bargaining unit employees may receive advice and assistance from their local Union representative.

XV. Performance Development Process Orientation and Education

Education and Communication

During the initial roll-out of SFA's new Performance Development Process, SFA Human Resources will distribute information about the new Performance Development Process in several ways, including through: employee e-mails, SFA Net, Inside SFA, In Step, and poster campaigns.

In addition to the communication vehicles, SFA Human Resources will distribute a job aid and conduct training for employees. The job aid and training describes the context for creating the new process, elements of the new process, and step-by-step instructions for using the on-line tool.

Performance Development Process (PDP) Trainers receive training focused on the benefits and usage of the new Performance Development process and tool. PDP Trainers partner with SFA Human Resources to guide employees through the new process and the use of the on-line tool. In addition to the formal coaching sessions in headquarters and regional offices, PDP Trainers and SFA Human Resources are available to provide additional performance support in the form of an "Open House". Employees can visit the "Open House" at any time during the day to ask additional questions, practice using the on-line tool or receive one-on-one assistance. Additionally, SFA Human Resources has a 'Point of Contact' telephone number where individuals can call if they need assistance as they are using the tool during roll-out.

SFA Human Resources is committed to doing all they can to provide appropriate performance support throughout the roll-out and administration of the new Performance Development Process. Employees are encouraged to consult with their leadership and their PDP Trainers for additional one-on-one assistance.

Following the initial roll-out of the new Performance Development Process, orientation on the new process will be provided to all employees joining SFA. Copies of the Job Aid and other Performance Development Fact Sheets will be made available to employees during their orientation to the organization. Additional education and performance support will be provided to all employees on a periodic basis.



Performance Development Process Evaluation

SFA Human Resources is committed to reviewing and evaluating the new process on a regular basis to ensure fairness, consistency and effectiveness of the program.

XVI. Record-keeping

Ratings of Record will be retained in electronic form in the Employee's Performance Folder (EPF) as designated by ED, for four years .(If current technology cannot support electronic filing, hard copies will be printed and filed in the short term.) When the EPF of the employee is sent to another agency or the National Personnel Records Center, the Servicing Personnel Office shall include in the EPF all performance Ratings of Record that are four years old or less and the plan on which they are based.



APPENDICES

A. Definitions

See Section V above for definitions of terms related to SFA's new Performance Development Process

B. Individual Development Plan [Performance Plan and Agreement]

The Individual Development Plan is developed by the employee using the on-line tool. This form is not produced in Word format.

C. Description for Assigning Achievement Levels

Achievement levels at SFA will be defined using benchmarks against a three-point scale: Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations [standard], and Improvement Required. SFA will define unique benchmark descriptions for the Meets Expectations achievement level for all of the Skills within the SFA Skill Model (see example below). When SFA Supervisors are applying the unique benchmark descriptions for each Skill, the supervisor will also consider the grade level of the position and the complexity of assignments associated with that position.

Example:

Functional SFA Skill - Learning Design and Development

| Achievement Level | Benchmark Descriptors |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Exceeds Expectations | Exhibits more than 3 of the 5 behaviors listed for the "Meets Expectations" standard. |
| Meets Expectations [Standard] | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develops materials based on learning specifications and approach• Demonstrates ability to recognize and describe learning needs and goals• Applies understanding of adult learning theory in design and development of learning materials• Designs learning materials on time and based upon customer specifications• Develops program effectiveness measures |
| Improvement Required | Exhibits less than 3 of the 5 behaviors listed for the "Meets Expectations" standard. |
| No Basis | There is no basis to assess this skill. |

In SFA's new Performance Development Process, the unique benchmark descriptions for each Skill will provide employees and Supervisors the ability to accurately define target training and education which will help ensure employees' success in their unique role at SFA.

The overall Rating of Record will be based on the following:

- Exceeds Expectations summary rating shall be assigned if and only if:
 - An individual receives three or more ratings of "Exceeds Expectations" out of the six Functional Skills outlined in his/her Skill Profile
 - Individual did not receive any ratings of "Improvement Required" ratings on the Professional Skills, Managerial Skills (if applicable), or Functional Skills
- Meets Expectations summary rating shall be assigned if and only if:
 - Individual did not receive any more than two "Improvement Required" ratings out of the six Functional Skills in his/her Skill Profile
 - Individual did not receive any ratings of "Improvement Required" on the Professional Skills and Managerial Skills (if applicable)



- Improvement Required summary rating shall be assigned if and only if:
 - Performance on one or more Professional Skills, and/or one or more Managerial Skills (if applicable) are appraised as “Improvement Required”
 - An individual receives three or more ratings of “Improvement Required” out of the six Functional Skills outlined in his/her Skill Profile.

The summary ratings for employees are *not* based on the establishment of forced distributions across the employee base – the ratings are based solely on performance by the individual. Any rating of record of Improvement Required will be reviewed by the Supervisor’s General Manager, CIO, CFO or Director prior to becoming the formal Rating of Record.

D. Performance Development Forms and Reports

SFA’s new Performance Development Process is intended to be administered through the use of a fully automated, web-based tool. The forms and reports are all completed and filed on-line.